

Physical Activity

Regular physical activity, fitness, and exercise are critically important for the health and well being of people of all ages. There is ample evidence that people who exercise regularly may benefit by lowering their risk of developing heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and colon cancer. It also contributes to psychological well-being and reduces feelings of stress. And regular physical activity is integral in maintaining a healthy weight. The 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines includes the recommendation of regular physical activity as a means to reduce the risk of obesity along with a healthy diet.

Despite the well-known benefits of physical activity, most adults and many children lead a relatively sedentary lifestyle and are not active enough to achieve these health benefits. A sedentary lifestyle is defined as engaging in no leisure-time physical activity (exercises, sports, physically active hobbies) in a two-week period.¹⁵

Data Analysis

Relatively little data is available by which to judge the state of physical activity (PA) in a community. Currently the state provides only data collected through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) surveys. The most recent local level survey was conducted in 2002 and carries a citation date of 2003. The BRFSS only surveys adults age 18 years and over.

In the most recent survey Cortland and Tompkins Counties were surveyed together and are reported as a group. Other rural counties were also grouped for the survey and the data is reported as such. This is done in order to maintain a consistency, to the extent possible, of sample size across the state. This in turn is a way to improve the confidence intervals and thereby the reliability of the data.

The PA question in the BRFSS survey asks if the respondent has participated in any leisure time activity or exercise in the past 30 days. In the regional comparison which has been routinely employed throughout this document, Cortland–Tompkins have the highest level of PA as seen in the bar chart, *Figure 167, page 178*, and at left.

Note that for strict interpretation of this data the confidence interval (C.I.) should be included. Most of the county groupings have a 95% C.I. of about 3.5. The statewide C.I. is 1.0. Accordingly, a strict interpretation may confirm that Cortland–Tompkins residents have a higher level of leisure-time PA than that state as a whole, after accounting for sampling error. However, this level of certainty is risky when making

| Leisure-time physical activity in past 30 days | |
|--|------|
| Cort-Tomp | 79.9 |
| Cay-Sen-Way | 77.1 |
| Che-Sch-Tio | 75.3 |
| CNY | 74.6 |
| NYS Excl. NYC | 77.6 |
| NYS | 74.6 |

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Leisure-time physical activity among adults: United States, 1997-98. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, 2002.

regional comparisons.

A breakdown of this indicator along demographic lines is also available (*see Figure 168, page 179, and Table 16, page 179.*) The data table includes confidence intervals, which are quite high for some of the categories. Never-the-less, there can be little doubt of the striking difference in PA participation levels between those with better than a high school education and those with only high school or less — the former being almost 40 percent greater than the latter.

Taking sampling error into account, the gap between males and females — 82.1 vs. 77.8 percent — is probably not significant. And though the differences among age groups also probably lacks statistical significance, the visible trend toward less activity for older groups is not inconsistent with anecdotal evidence.

Community Resources

Health Promotion Program

The Tompkins County Health Department's (TCHD) Health Promotion Program (HPP) encourages regular physical activity in its outreach efforts regarding the prevention of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. It provides technical assistance to worksites interested in worksite wellness programs that promote physical activity among their employees. HPP maintains a web site with information on worksite physical activity campaigns and incentive programs. www.tompkins-co.org/wellness. (*See Figure 169 and Figure 170, page 180.*)

Activity environment

Tompkins County has a rich infrastructure that provides ample opportunity for participation in a variety of seasonal and year-round activities. These include (but are not limited to) 4 state parks, city parks, ice arenas, a skateboard park, numerous walking trails and fitness clubs. The Cayuga Waterfront Trail is a recent endeavor that will eventually connect with the City of Ithaca downtown, the Farmers' Market, Buttermilk Falls State Park and the Black Diamond Trail. The Chamber of Commerce with local businesses, TCHD, community members and planners as participants heads the effort.

Tompkins County has numerous clubs and organizations to suit a variety of interests. These include track, rowing, cycling, running, hiking and triathlon, clubs and hockey, softball, swimming and tennis associations available to a range of age groups.

Healthy City initiative

City of Ithaca Mayor Carolyn Peterson invited a number of health professionals, citizens, agency representatives to participate in a "Healthy City" initiative. Promoting regular physical activity to the people who live, work and visit Ithaca is a primary focus.

Opportunities for Action

As noted above, Tompkins County offers numerous opportunities not all of which are mentioned here, to be physically active. And yet there are many residents who remain sedentary. Worksites, schools, community groups, faith communities can provide a supportive environment where daily physical activity becomes the norm. This can be achieved through worksite policies; physical education classes that focus on activities that appeal to students of all abilities and interests and neighborhood walking groups.

Figures and Tables

Figure 167 — Leisure-time physical activity, regional comparison

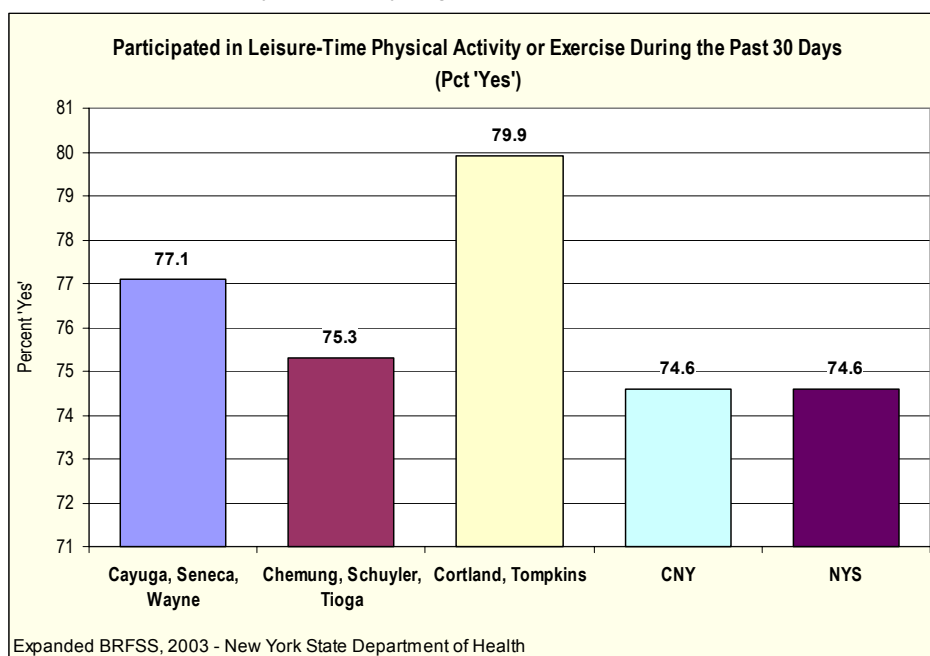


Figure 168 — Leisure-time physical activity, Cortland–Tompkins

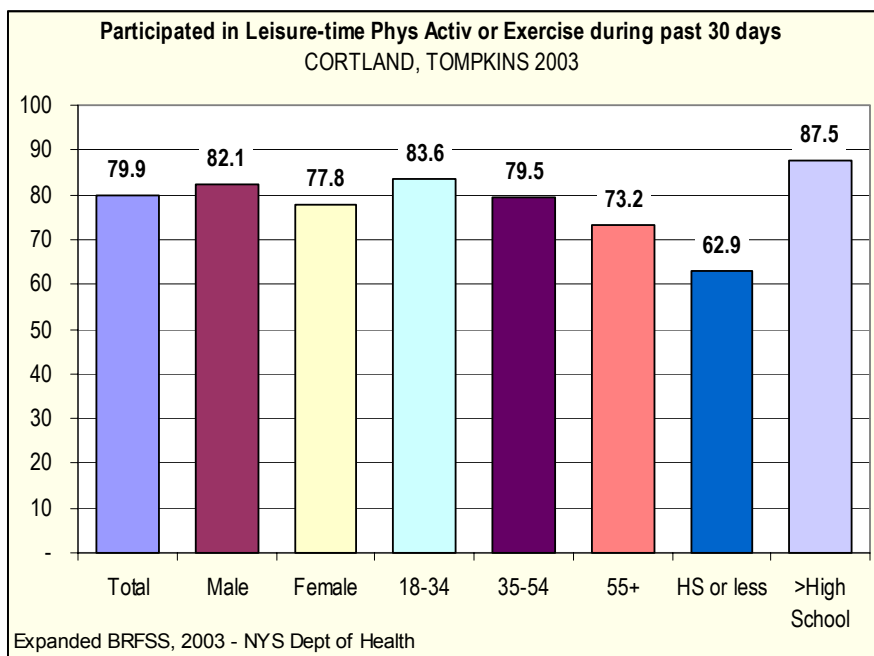


Table 16 — Leisure-time physical activity, Cortland–Tompkins

**Participated in Leisure-Time Physical Activity
or Exercise During the Past 30 Days**

CORTLAND, TOMPKINS 2003

| Dem Groups | n ¹ | Yes % ² | n | No % | C.I. ³ |
|--------------|----------------|--------------------|-------|------|-------------------|
| Total | 505 | 79.9 | 138 | 20.1 | 3.5 |
| Male | 209 | 82.1 | 53 | 17.9 | 4.9 |
| Female | 296 | 77.8 | 85 | 22.2 | 5.0 |
| 18-34 | 147 | 83.6 | 29 | 16.4 | 5.8 |
| 35-54 | 196 | 79.5 | 50 | 20.5 | 5.5 |
| 55+ | 157 | 73.2 | 58 | 26.8 | 6.5 |
| HS or less | 132 | 62.9 | 79 | 37.1 | 7.7 |
| >High School | 373 | 87.5 | 59 | 12.5 | 3.4 |
| NYS Total | 18,057 | 74.6 | 6,115 | 25.4 | 1.0 |

Expanded BRFSS, 2003 - NYS Dept of Health

¹Use pcts based on row denominators <50 with caution

²Weighted Percent

³95% Confidence Interval




Worksite Wellness for Tompkins County

Worksite environments that support heart-healthy lifestyle choices in Tompkins County, NY


[Worksite Wellness](#)
[Healthy Living](#)
[HHW Heart Check](#)




PHYSICAL ACTIVITY COUNTS!
Track Your Daily Activity



5 DAY Challenge



Love Your Heart NY!
Support a Clean Indoor Air Act
From Workplaces



Write!

[Share Ideas / Ask Questions](#) about worksite wellness

[Contact information](#)

[Site Contents](#)

[Tompkins County Health Department](#)

[Tompkins County Home Page](#)


[New York State Department of](#)

This page last updated: August 12, 2004


WHERE TO BEGIN?

Steps for starting a worksite wellness program


PROGRAMS & PROJECTS



Fruit & Snack Bowl
Support and encourage healthy food choices by providing a source of healthy snacks at your worksite.



Worksite environments that support good nutrition and regular physical activity are central to lowering the risk of heart disease.



**PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY
COUNTS!**

PERSONAL SCORESHEET

Name: _____
Phone: _____
Date: _____

What Counts for Physical Activity*

Walking (3 mph or faster; that's 1/2 mile ~or about 1,000 steps~ in 10 minutes) **(W)**

Active Cleaning chores (C)

Biking (road, trail, or stationary)**(B)**

Stairwalking (S)

Jogging (J)

Jumping rope or other • in-place aerobics (R)

Active Yard work •
(shoveling, raking, hoeing, etc.)**(Y)**

Active Team Sports •
(soccer, hockey, basketball, etc.)**(T)**

Swimming Laps (L)

*Use the **(letter)** code to mark your daily activities in the chart (right). Try a variety, or stick with one that works best for you.

Mark daily activities down •
columns: Count 1 point •
for every 10 minutes •
of moderate •
activity

| | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 10 Minutes OF ACTIVITY | | | | | | | |
| +10 Minutes OF ACTIVITY | | | | | | | |
| +10 Minutes OF ACTIVITY | | | | | | | |
| +10 Minutes OF ACTIVITY | | | | | | | |
| ✖ Mark additional points here to track up to 1 hour of physical activity a day | | | | | | | |

Point Goal

FOR THIS WEEK

Point Total for this week:

(Count up your physical activity! point for every 10 minutes of moderately strenuous activity)

www.tompkins-co.org/wellness/worksite/
 Healthy Heart Worksite Project, Health Promotion Program, Tompkins County Health Department 02/02